

**It's Judgment Day:
A Good Hard Last Look, Cold Feet and/or
Grasping for the Last Concessions
AB X1 1 (Núñez)**

As all of you know by now, AB X1 1 (Núñez) is scheduled for hearing tomorrow in Senate Health Committee. As we have heard from many of you around the state, I hear differing levels of anxiety and conviction. From some, there is a fear that it will pass and then lose on the ballot. From others, there is concern that it will pass and be unable to control rising health costs. Still others fear the gains they have negotiated cannot be written in stone for all time. And others fear it will never allow their favorite solution – single payor, local solutions, or employer mandates to emerge. Others want to take more time to negotiate. Others say wait for a federal solution. Consumers, unions, employers, counties, health plans and providers are split.

At ITUP, our goal is coverage for the uninsured. We do encourage you to take a last, long, hard, thoughtful look, take a deep breath and then support the bill and its financing. We will never cover the uninsured by stopping at the precipice, looking down and succumbing to fear. We will only cover the uninsured by moving forward with the best available opportunity at each moment. No, this is not the perfect solution, but it is a reasonably good one. No, this is not writ in stone, and it will change and evolve over time. Yes, there should be more cost containment, but the measure provides a lot more tools and incentives to control costs than we have now and the trigger mechanism in Section 5 of the ballot measure assures that there will be a constant readjustment of the bill to assure that costs and revenues balance. That is what good systems do; they are not static and frozen, but rather are dynamic and evolutionary. If we fail to move forward, we do move back. Rising health costs will drive us towards more uninsured and slimmer private coverage. Neither government nor employer revenues can sustain the anticipated growth in health spending; the Governor and legislative leaders were and are correct in calling for “shared responsibility”. When I look at the current version of the bill, it is much improved from the Governor, Speaker and Senate President’s initial proposals and better than the Vermont and Massachusetts legislation passed last year as a result of a lot of deliberation and thoughtful compromise. This is law-making at its best, not at its worst. Stakeholders are still pushing for last minute advantages, as we would all expect them to do. We do hope that you will all decide to support increased coverage for the uninsured. What do you think; we welcome your thoughts and reactions.